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The House Armed Services Committee voted Wednesday to permit the Pentagon to retain routine use of lie detectors, exempting it from a proposed ban.

The exemption, in an amendment to a bill that would restrict government use of polygraph tests, was adopted without objection.

The legislation still must be approved by the House Intelligence Committee before it can be sent to the House floor for action.

The bill would prohibit federal agencies from using lie detectors to question employees or applicants for employment and would limit their use to specific criminal investigations.

It would also prohibit federal agencies from demanding that employees or job applicants submit articles they might write for publication to advance review by the agency.

However, the bill as approved earlier by the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee would exempt the CIA and the National Security Agency from the ban on polygraph use and the advance review of writings.

The amendment extending the ban to the Pentagon was offered by Rep. Bill Nichols, D-Ala., chairman of the panel's investigations subcommittee, at the Pentagon's request.

It would not be a blanket exemption and would apply chiefly to the Defense Intelligence Agency and to other areas involved in the handling of secret matters.

The exemption was requested by Richard Stilwell, a Defense Department deputy undersecretary and a retired Army general, in testimony before the subcommittee earlier this month.

Witnesses for the CIA and the National Security Agency also questioned the failure of the bill to grant an exemption from the ban to the Defense Department.

In urging adoption of the amendment, Nichols said it was "a reasonable effort" to meet the Pentagon's need "to conduct polygraph examinations in the personnel security, intelligence and counterintelligence fields."